

Please introduce yourself.

I am Klu rgyal from Ya rdzi (Xunhua) Salar (Sala, Za lar) Autonomous County of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. I was born in rural /Dmag dpon (Muhong) Village and grew up with two brothers and a sister under my parents' good care. I completed school in the rural villages of my home place before entering Mtsho sngon Nationalities University, where I graduated with a BA in Tibetan Language and Literature in 2000.

From 2002 to 2004, I studied English in the English-Tibetan Program of Mtsho sngon Normal University, where I also gained skills in implementing community development projects. With support, I was able to do different grassroots community projects from 2002 to 2013. Thanks to these work experiences, I had the opportunity to do a MA in Rural and Regional Development in Thailand.

In 2009, I participated in the US Embassy's International Visitor Leadership Program,² and also attended a Georgetown Leadership Seminar, an annual gathering of selected rising leaders from around the world for a week of intensive discussion on major international issues. In 2010, I was selected by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for a three-week program in Education for Sustainable Development in Formal Education in Sweden.

More recently, I have concentrated on being a Tibetan restaurant entrepreneur. My aim is to create development opportunities for Tibetans by promoting the Tibetan restaurant business and developing its market. I am currently leading the Mtsho sngon Provincial Tibetan Restaurant Association, which formed in 2016. Currently it has forty-eight Tibetan restaurant members who are from Mtsho sngon and Gansu provinces. The mission of the

2018. Restaurateur: Klu rgyal. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:164-187.

² This program provides opportunity to experience American political, economic, social, and cultural life, bringing up to 5,000 professional emerging leaders from around the globe to the USA each year for programs lasting up to three weeks.

association is to promote Tibetan food culture and develop the Tibetan food market.

Describe the beginnings of your restaurant endeavors and what your experience has been.

I started my restaurant business in 2012, while dealing with challenges in continuing my NGO work. I considered opening a teahouse. I enjoy spending leisure time in teahouses where friends can easily meet and discuss work while hanging out. These were my initial motivations. However, when I looked at this more closely, I realized that I lacked funds so I went looking for a co-investor. I convinced a friend to join me and we then opened our restaurant. We have been very lucky. Business has been very good since the second week of opening.

A key reason for this success is the excellent location of the restaurant on Nanshan 'South Mountain' Road here in Zi ling (Xining) centered in a Tibetan community. Our standards for sanitation and food security have been consistently higher than other Tibetan restaurants in Zi ling.

Following this success, we opened another restaurant in Zi ling and one in Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Town in Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. However, these were not as successful as the first one.

In managing these restaurants for six years, I have learned how important location is to success. A Tibetan restaurant should be located where it is easily accessible and visible to potential Tibetan customers. Secondly, the quality and taste of the food is the soul of a restaurant so it is very important to pay attention to the food on a daily basis to ensure that the chefs are making really tasty food for the customers. Service and cleanliness are equally important. Many Tibetan restaurants have failed because of substandard service and poor sanitation.

What is the Tibetan food market?

The Tibetan food market is changing in terms of the number of restaurants, food variety, and management standards. It is still far behind the Muslim and Chinese food markets. The restaurant business is seen as easier than many other types of businesses, so Tibetans prefer to do this. Nevertheless, because there is a lack of high level management skills, creativity, and attractiveness regarding the dishes, service and whole environment, consequently, it is hard for them to survive. Tibetan restaurants have not yet settled into a standard business model and tend to be temporary and somewhat disorganized. Typically, non-Tibetan customers see Tibetan restaurants as having poor sanitation, oily food, high prices, and limited food variety. Most Tibetan restaurant customers are Tibetans, which means the Tibetan food market is very small.

What have you done in response to these challenges?

I initially proposed the formation of a Tibetan restaurant alliance in Ziling focused on promoting the Tibetan food market, collective purchases of food materials to reduce costs, and an exchange of learning experiences to improve the capability of the restaurant owners. We wanted the alliance to stand out from other Tibetan restaurants, and eventually improve the Tibetan restaurant market as a whole. Following discussions at our first meeting, we agreed to set up a provincial level association - Mtsho sngon Provincial Tibetan Restaurant Association - to assist Tibetan restaurants. The participants also agreed to adopt my proposal on the development of the Tibetan food market. Later, fifty restaurants joined the association and in August 2016 we conducted the first Tibetan Restaurant Week. For three days all the member restaurants reduced their prices. This event was advertised via local newspapers and magazines, as well as websites and TV for both Tibetan and non-Tibetan customers.

In November 2016, Tibetan restaurant owners and experienced entrepreneurs were invited to a workshop to find a way to develop the Tibetan restaurant business in the competitive market. In December, we conducted a Tibetan chef competition in conjunction with Mtsho sngon Tibetan TV Station. We also set up a WeChat group that has nearly 200 individuals who share information. Currently, with

project support, we are building a Tibetan food website similar to the Meituan website. Our goal is to introduce Tibetan food culture and knowledge, advertise the Tibetan food market, and sell food.

We conducted our second workshop on 4-5 September 2017, and invited four American professional managers to share their experiences at the international level. We had fifty-two participants. Finally, I have raised project funding to train Tibetan restaurant managers, chefs, and waiters. These activities are scheduled for mid-December 2017 to February 2018.

All these activities are focused on promoting the Tibetan food market, improving Tibetan restaurant management and capacity, and improving the self-awareness of restaurant owners and their capabilities to make the restaurants attractive to non-Tibetan customers. It is necessary to intervene in this way because many non-Tibetans know very little about Tibetan food, and therefore avoid Tibetan restaurants. Promoting the Tibetan food market in different ways may change their view of Tibetan food.

What is the Tibetan restaurant scene like in Zi ling and in other parts of Mtsho sngon?

There are more than thirty Tibetan restaurants in Zi ling. Some operate in homes - informal home-restaurants. Others are in other areas and operate with all the required legal documents. Most Tibetan restaurants have few workers and are poorly managed. While Tibetan restaurants may be decorated in a Tibetan style very nicely, they may also feature poor sanitation and oily food. As already mentioned, these conditions fail to attract non-Tibetan consumers.

What are the biggest challenges for you as a restaurateur in Zi ling?

The high cost of renting suitable facilities, the lack of professional chefs and waiters, and expanding the market by attracting non-Tibetan customers.

Who are your customers?

Ninety percent of my restaurants' customers are Tibetans. It is more or less the same for most of the Tibetan restaurants in Xining.

What are your customers' favorite foods?

This differs for rural and city customers. Tibetan *mog mog* 'steamed dumplings', yak meat sausage, blood sausages, steamed dumplings, and various noodles are favorites for those from rural areas. *Phyur mog* 'cheese¹ momo'. *Dkar sha* 'boiled small dumplings',² and fried dishes are favorites for city people.

Who are your cooks and how were they trained?

My restaurants provide both Tibetan and Chinese foods so we have one Tibetan chef and one Chinese chef. At the time of hiring, the Chinese chef had some skills, but the Tibetan chef learned his skills in the restaurant.

Who are the waiters in your restaurants? How were they trained?

The waiters are Tibetans from rural villages. New waiters receive three days of training from an experienced waiter who explains and demonstrates what they need to know. Afterwards, the new waiters work independently, but can always ask for help from experienced waiters when necessary. Tibetans rarely treat restaurant work as a career, but rather as a side occupation so training them to be professional is challenging.

Where and how do you obtain the food/vegetables/fruit for your restaurant?

¹ Cheese = *chur ba*.

² Diced meat and onions are placed in a bowl of water, covered with a piece of dough made from wheat flour, and steamed for about fifteen minutes. Afterwards, the steamed cover is broken into small pieces and placed in the bowl to absorb the flavor of the meat soup.

We have agreements with nearby vendors, who send food to meet our orders. Every month we check the bill and pay them.

What advice do you have for someone thinking about starting a restaurant?

First, your own interests and experiences in the restaurant business are very important. Your personal interest is the engine to start and continue your restaurant, and also to push you to learn quickly and persevere, otherwise, the hard, complex work of establishing a restaurant will frustrate you. Secondly, the choice of the restaurant location is very important. Your restaurant should be near or better, at the center of, your potential customer population. Once you open your restaurant, the quality of your service, and sanitation and food standards are critical to the success of your business. It is also important to be creative in terms of decoration, service, food, and advertising.

Please give us the names, locations/addresses, and contact information for your restaurants.

Amala (A ma'i g.yang khyim) 'Prosperous Family' Tibetan Restaurant is located on Nanshan East Road of Xining City, opposite the Qinghai Tibetan Medical Hospital. Our phone number is +8619718117935

What else would you like to say about your life as a restaurateur?

Not long after I opened my first restaurant, a fellow villager asked me why I opened a restaurant since I had graduated from an international college and had done NGO work with international partners. He said that I shouldn't waste my life in the restaurant business. At that time, I was also confused. However, my hesitation disappeared when my restaurant inspired other, more established Tibetan restaurants to make positive changes in terms of food variety, restaurant environment, and management. Although many Tibetans today do not perceive a career as a restaurateur as something very positive, I believe that if I can lead Tibetan restaurants in a better direction, it is as

worthwhile as doing community development because it provides economic opportunities to many people. However, restaurant management makes you very busy. You have less time to spend with family and friends. It is especially difficult to work with employees who have limited formal education and are from rural villages, as they are not used to working inside a box of rules.

There is a lot of talk these days about being an entrepreneur. What advice do you have for Tibetans considering going into business?

It is very important to find the value of doing one type of business, rather than thinking of making money only for oneself. This value that you identify needs to give you the passion to dedicate your life to this business. You will then not get involved in negatively comparing your work with others, and find joyful satisfaction in your efforts. It is also important to have a good knowledge of and rich experiences in the business that you will go into. This knowledge is worth more than the money you have to start your business. Thirdly, it is OK to dream about success, but it also critical to think about what you will do if your business fails. Fourth, if it is hard for you to start a business by yourself, you might consider finding a good partner who shares your values to work with.

Please tell us about your cultural preservation work.

Since 2008 I have done three cultural preservation projects focused on Tibetan folk culture, such as local rituals, festivals, and customs in both pastoral and farming communities. These projects created DVDs and books, which were distributed to local schools and communities for locals to re-discover their life and culture. The outcomes were also presented to scholars and universities as Tibetan culture research materials.

Please tell us about your community development work.

In 2002, with support from various people, I started community development work. I did my first project in my village, which is located

in a mountain area. It provided solar cookers for each village family to reduce women's fuel-collecting burden and environmental degradation. This project was very successful and highly appreciated by locals. This encouraged me to continue to work in community development. By 2013, I had implemented fifteen education projects including building schools, providing school equipment, training teachers, providing books and student necessities, arranging cultural education activities; livelihood and agricultural projects; and village literacy projects, with a total value of about two million RMB. These projects were funded by embassies in Beijing, and international foundations and individuals. These projects effectively addressed the urgent problems that schools and villages faced at that time. Seeing the great value to rural communities, I promised myself to continue this work for my whole life. Therefore, I established an NGO, Friend of Rural Community Development, to help rural villages. However, for complicated reasons this dream ended.

IMAGES

Amala Restaurant Menu and Tibetan Restaurant Association activities.





ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
上豆泥
Shang Dou Ni
¥28元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
椒盐牛肉
Jiao Yan Niou
¥38元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
藏式拼盘
Zang Shi Pin Pan
¥42元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
萝卜炖牛肉
Luo Bo Cuo Niou
¥68元/例



图片仅供参考 出店以实物为准

图片仅供参考 出店以实物为准

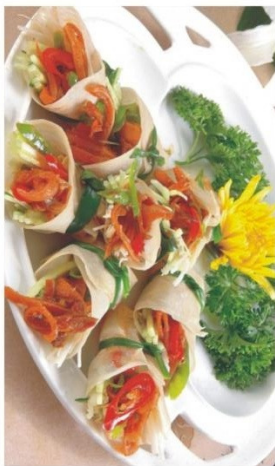


ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
酥油青稞粒
Su You Qing He Li
¥32元/例



特色藏餐

ལྷ་མོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་
萝卜炒牛肉配凉拌
Luo Bo Chao Niou Pei Liang Ban
¥48元/例





鱼香肉丝
Yu Xiang Rou Si
¥24元/例



宫保肉片
Gong Bao Chicken
¥24元/例



珍珠电子
Zhen Zhu Dian Zi
¥48元/例



大川回锅肉
Da Chuan Hui Guo Rou
¥36元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



酸辣白菜
Suan La Bai Cai
¥22元/例



油菜菜
You Cai
¥18元/例



娃娃菜
Wa Wa Cai
¥26元/例



上海青
Shang Hai Qing
¥18元/例



西兰花
Xi Lan Hua
¥20元/例



土豆丝
Tu Dou Si
¥18元/例



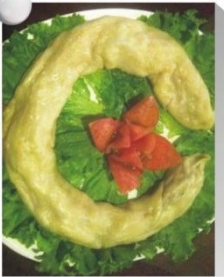
虎皮辣子爆肥牛
Hu Pi La Zi Bao Fei Niu
¥36元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
牛角羹
Tib. Beef Shank
48元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
藏红花汤炖蔬菜
Tib. Hot Pot with Saffron, Veg. 38元/例



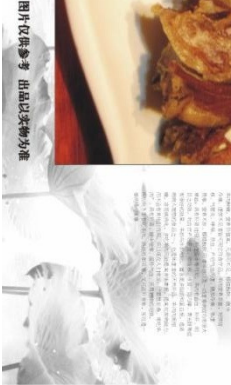
ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
奶渣包子
Tib. Cheese Dumpling
48元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
特色藏餐
Tib. Special Cuisine
28元/例



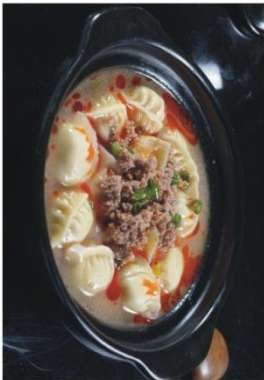
ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
生爆牛肉
Tib. Beef Shank
78元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
拉萨肉排
Lhasa Meat Pie
36元/例



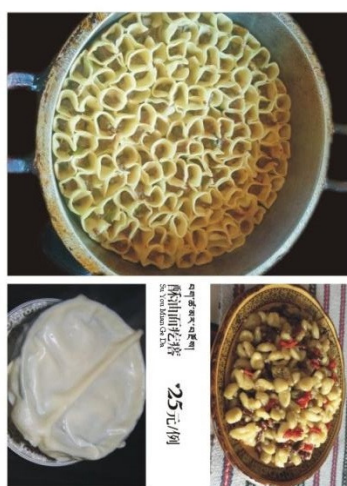
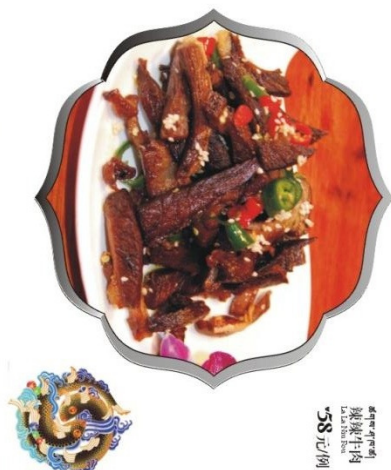
ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
牛肉水饺
Tib. Beef Soup
22元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་
拉萨咖喱饭
Lhasa Curry
28元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



ཁྲ་གྲུ།
藏式红点
Tibetan Red Dot
*36元/例



留帖
Tib.
*38元/例



ཁྲ་གྲུ།
珍珠包奶糖
Tibetan Milk Candy
*36元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

ཁྲ་གྲུ།
香酥牦牛肉
Tibetan Beef
*42元/例



ཁྲ་གྲུ།
特色藏餐
Tibetan Cuisine
*38元/例

ཁྲ་གྲུ།
人参果玉米
Tibetan Corn
*38元/例



ཁྲ་གྲུ།
藏式人参果
Tibetan Fruit
*36元/例



ཁྲ་གྲུ།
藏式下凡
Tibetan Food
*28元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



生炆牦牛肉
Sheng Fen Ma Niou
Stewed Yak Meat
¥48元/例

精美凉菜



麻辣蕨根粉
Ma La Wu Dang Gen Fen
Spicy Wudang Root
¥16元/例



凉拌萝卜
Liang Ban Luo Bo
Cold Cucumber
¥12元/例



凉拌黄瓜
Liang Ban Huang Gu
Cold Cucumber
¥12元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



山珍双耳
Shan Zhen Shuang Er
Mountain Delicacies
¥22元/例

精美凉菜

凉拌木耳
Liang Ban Mu Er
Cold Wood Ear
¥22元/例



三色金针菇
San Se Jin Zhen Gu
Three-Color Golden
¥28元/例



小葱拌羊腿
Xiao Cong Ban Yang Tui
Small Onion Mixed
¥48元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



野菌汤
Ye Jun Tang
38元/例



时蔬三鲜汤 22元/例
Shi Shu San Xian Tang



紫菜蛋花汤
Zi Cai Dan Hua Tang



西紅柿蛋湯
Xi Hong Shi Dan Tang



西湖牛肉羹 22元/例
Xia Hu Niu Rou Geng



发仁·熬牛肉
Mou Fren Ao Phi Fren
18元/例



冬瓜排骨汤
Dong Gua Pai Gu Tang
28元/例



锅仔萝卜羊排
Gao Zai Luo Bo Yang Pai
52元/例



青稞粥
Qing Ke Zou
18元/碗
36元/锅

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

Group photo of workshop participants in front of Amala Tibetan Restaurant, Zi ling City, 4 September 2017.





Tibetan chef competition in Zi ling, December 2016.



第一届藏餐文化美食节

活动时间：2016年8月12日至14日

活动地点：以下各餐厅



地点：西宁南山东路120号省藏医院正对面
电话：0971-8117935



地点：西宁大十字文庙街文庙广场（总店）
电话：0971-8211669



地点：西宁南山路第四人民医院对面
电话：0971-8210680



地点：西宁六一桥汽车站旁边
电话：15722345565



地点：西宁市开发区半岛步行街
电话：0971-7733980



地点：西宁市海湖新区西关大街西城名邸(海湖新城对面)
电话：13619700234



地点：西宁市东大街38号莫家街口那达广场八层
电话：0971-8245577



地址：西宁市南山路201号省藏医院对面
电话：15609712022



地址：西宁市假日王都酒店隔壁颐园小区1号楼四单元0101室
电话：0971-8290204



地点：西宁夏都大街夏都家园北院东面
电话：18709785067



地址：湟中县塔尔寺对面金塔桥37号
电话：0971-2235281



地址：塔尔寺东拉市场36号
电话：15294111666
13299882188



地址：塔尔寺金塔路216号
电话：15294111666
13299882188



地点：黄南州同仁县年都乎市场加措大酒店
电话：0973-8723676



地点：同仁县热地广场旁边
电话：0973-8795000
15809736078



地点：黄南州同仁县铁吾小区（热地公寓一楼）
电话：0973-5930555



地址：同仁县青海热地夏都中路
电话：18609735266
15909732531



地址：同仁县
电话：18935537676



地址：同仁县东山路汽车站斜对面
电话：13897033066

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The opening ceremony for Tibetan Restaurant Week 2016 was held in front of Amala Tibetan Restaurant in Zi ling City.



NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a ma'i g.yang khyim ཨ་མའི་གཡང་ཁྱིམ།

Amala 阿玛拉

chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།

chur ba ཇུར་བ།

dkar sha དཀར་ཤ།

dmag dpon དམག་དཔོན།

Hainan 海南

klu rgyal ལུ་རྒྱལ།

Meituan 美团

mog mog མོག་མོག།

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

Muhong 木洪

Nanshan 南山

phyur mog ཕུར་མོག།

Qiabuqia 恰卜恰

Qinghai 青海

Salar, Sala 撒拉

Xining 西宁

Xunhua 循化

ya rdzi ཡ་རྩི།

za lar ཟ་ལར།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།